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ABSTRACT

Improvement of the student learning experience necessitates teacher evaluation. Evaluation optimally is an on-going process, involving the teacher as an active participant and decision-maker. Information is gathered and compared with pre-established criteria, resulting in decisions to modify techniques as necessary. Evaluative criteria are established precisely and jointly by both teacher and evaluator, usually concerning a few major objectives. The question of who will evaluate becomes less threatening to a teacher when it is understood that evaluation is intended as a helping instrument. (SM)

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PROJECT EVALUATION

Capitol Region Education Council

TEACHER EVALUATION

Philip S. Saif

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INTRODUCTION

Connecticut Public Act #73-456 has been modified. The new Public Act #74-278 indicates that continuous evaluation of personnel is mandated. The section concerning the evaluation of teachers reads:

> *"The superintendent of each school district shall, in accordance with guidelines established by the state board of education for the development of evaluation programs and such other guidelines as may be established by mutual agreement between the town or regional board of education and the teachers' representative chosen pursuant to section 10-153b of the general statutes, continuously evaluate or cause to be evaluated each teacher. The superintendent shall report the status of such evaluations to the town or regional board of education on or before June first of each year. For purposes of this section, the term 'teacher' shall include each employee of a board of education, below the rank of superintendent, who holds a certificate or permit issued by the state board of education."*

On what basis should teachers be evaluated? Should evaluation stress the process -- that is, teaching performance -- or the product, the performance of students?

The evaluation of a teacher as discussed in this booklet considers both process and product as important components. This method treats teacher evaluation as a cycle of activities: an on-going process in which the teacher is an active participant, leading toward improved classroom instruction.

This booklet is the result of several discussions, meetings and ideas. Larry Benedict of the University of Massachusetts, Jeanette Hotchkiss, CEA, and teachers from the Capitol Region Education Council area were helpful in their suggestions.

To all who contributed in introducing this booklet, I would like to express my thanks.

June, 1974 P.S.

This booklet will discuss three questions related to the evaluation of teachers:

1) *Why should teachers be evaluated?*

2) *What is educational evaluation?*

3) *How can teachers be evaluated?*

The first two questions have been discussed at length in a document published by CREC in 1973: *A Practical Guide for Evaluation.* However, it is useful to mention the following points:

The purpose of teacher evaluation should be the improvement of the student learning experience.

Sometimes school districts use evaluation as a public relations technique -- to show the community that there is something good happening in education. They may be seeking evaluation in any form because it is a fashionable approach to education and looks good in the annual report.

Evaluation is not a fashionable experience. Rather, it is conducted for the purpose of improving education. The information gathered during the evaluation may be useful in giving the school system a clearer picture of its own operations. But the goal is educational advancement, and the methods used during the evaluation must be dictated by that goal.

In order to clarify the term *"evaluation"* as it is used in education, the following simple definition will be employed:

Evaluation is a collection of data for further decision making.

Turning to the question of how teachers should be evaluated, one should keep in mind that the purpose is to improve classroom instruction.

The techniques discussed here are already familiar to teachers who use diagnostic methods in their daily evaluation of their students.

Evaluation of student performance is usually on-going, and utilizes a variety of techniques. In this respect student evaluation is far ahead of teacher evaluation. Students are tested and observed to determine how well they are performing on the tasks

set for them. The information gathered is used to determine where they need more instruction and to suggest ways of providing the needed help. This diagnostic approach allows teachers to help students who have not yet mastered the subject matter.

Teacher evaluation should serve a similar helpful purpose with the evaluator providing teacher support. Once evaluation becomes an on-going process, no single evaluation will determine a teacher's future. Data collected will provide a long-range overview of strengths and weaknesses, and will indicate measures to be taken by the teacher and evaluator to improve student achievement.

The teacher should be an active participant in the evaluation process. If information gathered during the evaluation is to be helpful for the teacher as well as the evaluator in making decisions, then the teacher and the evaluator should negotiate and decide together what should be evaluated, what criteria should be used, and how information should be collected. A mutual agreement should be written, with copies for both parties.

Once negotiation has taken place, and there is an understanding between the evaluator and the teacher, self-

evaluation by the teacher is possible. Self-evaluation should be done by the teacher for self-criticism. It should not be a tool against a teacher. Such tools include video-tapes, audio-tapes, questionnaires to colleagues, and/or to students. Therefore, parts of the evaluation can take place without an observer.

Teacher evaluation by the evaluator should be a continuous process and should not be confined to one or two classroom visits during the year. Both self-evaluation and external evaluation should be on-going efforts to gather information, according to agreed upon criteria. A constant sharing of information between the teacher and the evaluator should take place, and decisions should be made periodically so that the desired improvements or modifications in instruction occur as the need arises.

Since the primary professional activity of a teacher is teaching, the major concerns of teacher evaluation should be effective student learning experiences. Most of the criteria used will relate to student performance and to teacher activities that promote student learning. Professional growth will probably also be considered. Teacher and evaluator will need to discuss and agree upon what constitutes professional growth

and whether to include activities which do not result in observable changes in classroom performance. Teacher values, attitudes, and human relations skills may also be included. Whether these are judged by the teacher's activities with students, with peers, or in the community, the measurements used should be carefully defined and agreed upon by the teacher and the evaluator.

Defining Evaluative Criteria

Criteria must be established before any systematic on-going diagnostic evaluation can take place. The selection of criteria should be negotiated between teacher and evaluator. It might be reasonable to inform other groups about the process and to invite their input; groups such as university professors, students, parents, etc., but the final decisions would rest with teachers and evaluators. Together they would identify the criteria for teacher evaluation and would work together to make changes within the classroom.

Evaluative criteria need to be expressed in precise terms so that there is no misunderstanding about their meaning. "Good teaching" is too fuzzy a concept to be useful in collecting data. One way to refine

such a broad concept is through a technique of breaking it down into smaller and smaller parts until precise statements can be made and objectives can be determined. CREC's Evaluation Center can give assistance in the use of this technique.

Since student learning is the primary concern of the teacher, the major evaluation criteria will be related to student performance. Good instructional objectives and effective methods for determining how well students are meeting the objectives are obviously important at this point.

For the first year of evaluation a limit of two or three objectives is recommended. Since the goal is always improved student learning, the criteria based on those objectives would define the level of student performance to be used in judging teacher performance.

Who Will Evaluate?

If teacher evaluation is to be an on-going process for the purpose of improving instruction, the evaluator should be someone in a position to give help and support to the teacher. The evaluator has a responsibility for helping the teacher make the changes needed to promote student

learning. Therefore, the evaluator will be someone in the school system; a department head, supervisor, or principal.

An evaluation consultant, from outside the school system, may provide help in the techniques of evaluation, but he should not make the decisions about what criteria would be used in the evaluation, what data would be gathered, how the information would be interpreted and used. These are decisions which should be negotiated between the teacher and the evaluator. The Evaluation Center of the Capitol Region Education Council can provide assistance in designing an evaluation procedure and applying good techniques.

Teacher observation is related to the problem of who evaluates. Should the observer be invited into the teacher's room or come unannounced? Either approach may distort the picture of a class. The teacher may be anxious and nervous; the students may act differently, either because the teacher has warned them, or because the observer is obtrusive. This problem, magnified because of the inadequacies of many current approaches to evaluation/assessment, becomes less important if the criteria for evaluation are known and agreed upon by both teacher and evaluator.

If teachers know that evaluation is not competition for a rating, but a process in which help is offered when needed, there will be less worry about the "who" and "when" of observation. Evaluation will be seen as a means to get help by teachers who are genuinely concerned about improving their own teaching.

Conclusion

Teacher evaluation, as described above, is a way for teachers and supervisors to work together in examining performance so that, together, they can effect changes to improve student learning experiences. When teachers are active participants in an on-going process, evaluation can be a valuable tool in improving education.